

Minutes of the meeting of the board of directors held at Paper Mill Lock, at 10.45 a.m. on Thursday 2nd September 2010.

Present: Roy Chandler (chairman), Colin Davis, Neil Edwards and John Pomfret.

In Attendance: Colin Edmond.

Apologies for Absence

1. Jim Jenkins.

Minutes of Meetings

2. The minutes of the board meeting held on 8th June 2010, which had been circulated prior to the meeting, including the edited minutes for publication, were approved as a true record of that meeting.

Health and Safety

3. (a) Colin Edmond reported that a child, part of a family group visiting the tearooms, had fallen into the lock at Paper Mill, a few days ago. One of our residential caretakers had seen the incident and promptly pulled the child out before the parents became aware. The board considered that the incident would not have been prevented by any additional notices and any fencing off of the lock was impractical. The existing policy of leaving the lock full had avoided any injury.
- (b) Roy Chandler reported that a boat owner had claimed some minor damage to his boat when it had been moved in order to allow bank-side repair works at Paper Mill. [Confidential discussion].
- (c) Colin Edmond reported that there had been no further incidents of minor thefts or acts of petty vandalism reported in the Heybridge area. The likely culprit of earlier incidents was believed to have left the area. The board agreed that there was now no need to install the previously proposed cheap dummy closed circuit camera. The local marine police were undertaking an increased number of patrols along the navigation, which had been beneficial. This unit had a jet-ski, which the board agreed could be used on the Navigation, without paying a licence fee, provided the speed limit was observed.
- (d) The large vessel which had sunk earlier in the year had now left the Navigation. Another vessel that had been of concern had had a considerable amount of improvement work undertaken, though its condition below the waterline was unknown. Two other vessels were still of some concern, and Colin Edmond was asked to contact the owners to ascertain what was planned for them.
- (e) The risk register, including for vessels in poor condition, had yet to be updated.
- (f) Further quotes for the ramps to the lock gates at Heybridge had yet to be obtained. A volunteer to take on this project was still needed.

- (g) Signs, as advised by the local police, to deter swimmers, etc, had been installed at Little Baddow and Barnes lock areas, and a further sign had been installed in the Springfield Lock area.
- (h) [Confidential item]
- (i) Colin Edmond reported that fire buckets had been positioned at the places previously agreed, other than at Sandford Lock.
- (j) [Confidential item]
- (k) A schedule of certification held at Head Office had been circulated. Colin Edmond advised that [a contractor] was no longer undertaking work on the Navigation, and could be removed from the list of those required to submit certificates of public liability insurance. [Another contractor] should be added to the list. Colin Edmond would contact the relevant contractors and submit copies of certification to Head Office.
- (l) A copy of the lifting certificate for the crane needed to be sent to Head Office. The certification for the crane slings had gone out of date on 25th August, and the crane would not be used again until these were renewed.
- (m) The certificate for lifting for the hiab on the weed boat was out of date, but the equipment was out of use, laid up on the bank. The future of the weed boat should be considered over the winter, as was not an efficient vessel to use. There was no equipment requiring a lifting certificate on the Buddy Boat. Marine surveys would be undertaken on all the work boats, other than the Buddy Boat and raiders, over the winter.
- (n) [Confidential item]

Staffing and Management Arrangements

- 4. (a) Carol Chalkey had resigned as a residential caretaker in early July on the sale of her boat. Rick Forsyth had been appointed to succeed her, with effect from 1st September, on [confidential arrangements]. Michael Bolwell had given notice that he intended to leave the Sandford position in the autumn, and his vessel was currently for sale. [Confidential items omitted]
- (b) [Confidential item].
- (c) The board was disappointed to note that there had still been no response to the appeal for professional assistance with legal work, planning, funding and environmental applications, made in the May 2010 edition of *Waterways*.
- (d) The board noted that IWA's trustees had reappointed Neil Edwards to the board of Essex Waterways Limited for a further term of three years.

Finance

- 5. (a) A report of income and expenditure to 30th June had been circulated to directors in advance, along with a commentary on the figures. The position was considered satisfactory, and the board noted that (i) Heybridge Plot income appeared lower than budget and asked if this could be checked, (ii) Willow income to the level of budget had been identified, and could arrive either towards the end of this year, or early next, (iii) the section 106 funds for Hall Bridge had arrived, and (iv) expenditure on transport and fuel, and on tools and equipment would exceed budget. A new ride-on mower had been purchased.

- (b) [Item of commercial confidence omitted]
- (c) Colin Edmond advised that the older, S-registration, Land Rover was showing its age and costing increasing amounts to keep on the road. The board asked that leasing options be looked at for a decision to be made at the next meeting.
- (d) A cash flow forecast had been circulated to the board, with a note of the balance on the restricted funds added as a footnote. Roy Chandler tabled an updated version at the meeting. The position looked satisfactory through to the end of the year.
- (e) Neil Edwards had circulated a paper on capital funding requirements, and reported back a discussion held by IWA's Finance Committee at its 31st July meeting. Finance Committee had agreed to consider the matter further at its 9th October meeting, but favoured either the retained profit or leasing options, which this board also favoured. Advice from the auditors would need to be taken to ensure there were no adverse tax implications.
- (f) The board noted a continuing rise in maintenance costs and the current levels of inflation, both by the Retail Price Index and other measures. Bearing in mind there had been a nil increase for 2010, the board agreed that all mooring fees and other charges should rise by 2.5% with effect from 1st January, other than the following: (i) The residential mooring fees at Heybridge should rise by a further 10% as the fourth out of five annual increases to bring rates to 50% above standard levels over five years, as previously agreed. (ii) The fees for overnight moorings at Heybridge would be increased by 5%, as they are currently well below market levels. (iii) The canoe licence fees would remain unchanged, with greater effort made on enforcement to ensure all canoeists paid. All prices would, of course, also be affected by the increase in VAT on 4th January. A newsletter would be prepared to advise customers.
- (g) The board agreed that consideration of staff salaries for 2011 should be placed on agenda for the December meeting.
- (h) Roy Chandler and Colin Edmond would put together a draft budget for 2011 shortly, and would circulate to directors for comment. The intent would be to have a finished budget ready for final approval at the December board meeting.
- (i) A paper covering property insurance had been circulated with the agenda by Neil Edwards. This set out arrangements adopted by IWA's Finance Committee, which had agreed that with effect from the next renewal, and for future acquisitions, only property at any one location worth a total of more than £1,000 should be insured. Directors agreed to adopt this policy for Essex Waterways Ltd too.
- (j) A paper covering an assets register had been circulated with the agenda by Neil Edwards. This set out arrangements adopted by IWA's Finance Committee, which had agreed that Head Office should maintain an assets register for:
 - (i) The auditors comprising all items of the Association that would individually cost more than £1,000 to replace;
 - (ii) Insurance purposes comprising all items to the Association that would individually cost more than £250 to replace, and for
 - (iii) Good governance, in addition to the above, all items that are considered 'irreplaceable'.The board agreed that a similar policy should be in place for Essex Waterways Ltd.
- (k) A list of current debtors had been circulated with the agenda and was reviewed. There was nothing of great concern, though one small debt was likely to need to be written off. The board also noted the full list of all those boats on the Navigation without either (i) a formal mooring

agreement, (ii) a copy of an up-to-date insurance certificate, or (iii) a copy of a Boat Safety Scheme certificate where moored above Hall Bridge, which had been circulated in July.

- (l) [Confidential item]
- (m) [Confidential item]
- (n) Roy Chandler reported that he is working on the leases schedule, and intends to pass on details to Hugh Turner to chase up shortly.
- (o) [Confidential item]
- (p) [Confidential item]
- (q) [Confidential item]
- (r) Roy Chandler advised that the requested Essex County Council grant for lock landing improvements had been agreed and the Environment Agency consents were being obtained. Work was due to take place this autumn. Roy Chandler had discussed a possible grant from [a funder – details omitted].
- (s) Neil Edwards explained that the auditors had raised the recommendation of a consistent purchase order procedure throughout the Association and subsidiary companies. Finance Committee had considered this, but felt it might be too bureaucratic, and instead had sought assurances from budget holders that appropriate procedures were in place in their area, and asked for details of who was authorised to commit to expenditure. The board agreed to formalise the following practice for all expenditure:
 - (i) Roy Chandler has the authority to commit to any expenditure approved by the board as part of the annual budget, and up to £1,000 in excess of this.
 - (ii) All expenditure above £2,000 should be instructed in writing, with a copy being sent to Head Office at the time the commitment to spend is made.
 - (iii) Colin Edmond has authority to incur expenditure of up to £2,000.
 - (iv) Hugh Turner, Martin Maudsley and Michael Cole have authority to incur expenditure of up to £250.
 - (v) Other than incidental expenses claimed via expense claim forms, all other expenditure outside the above should be agreed by directors, by e-mail between meetings if necessary.
- (t) The board approved that the signatories for the company's bank account should be Neil Edwards, Helen Elliott-Adams and Roy Chandler, with two signatories for amounts over £500. Roy Chandler would complete the mandate tabled at the meeting, and return to Head Office.
- (u) Neil Edwards reported that Paula Smith was negotiating the best prices for electricity supply contracts that concluded this coming autumn. The board approved this. [Note: a saving of about 15% has been achieved, by switching to Scottish Power from Eon].

Report from the Navigation Manager

- 6 (a) [Confidential item]
- (b) The board noted that the Section 106 funding for Hall Bridge had been received, and that the restoration of the bridge had gained some useful publicity. A connecting path, which we had hoped Essex County Council would fund, has yet to be progressed. This needed to be chased up.

- (c) Colin Edmond confirmed that the two WRG Canal Camps held this year had been very helpful, and it was agreed that a similar pattern of Camps should be sought for 2011. Neil Edwards would ask Jenny Black to progress this.
- (d) The board noted that the work by Land & Water at Paper Mill had progressed substantially. Further works (at an amount) to address erosion on the Lock Island had been agreed by the board by e-mail between meetings, and a higher specification for piling on the upper moorings was agreed at the meeting, bring a total spend of about [an amount] excluding VAT. This was funded with £10,000 from Essex Environment Trust, and the balance from IWA's restricted fund for the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation, from the company's past surpluses. Neil Edwards would update IWA's finance manager and national treasurer on the cash amounts to ensure there was no difficulty with cash flow, etc.
- (e) Roy Chandler reported that other work at Paper Mill was unlikely to progress until at least the autumn.
- (f) There had been no progress on proposed works at Heybridge North Quay as insufficient funding was available at the moment. If substantial funding became available from [a potential funder], then this might be progressed in 2011. A quote for the work would be sought from [a contractor].
- (g) Roy Chandler reported that Chelmsford Borough Council had still not progressed clearing out the feeder stream, probably owing to difficulty of access, and the Environment Agency had yet to fit the promised grille. Both would be chased up to try to get the work done in this financial year. Roy Chandler had identified a means of dry pumping from the feeder stream, which could resolve the access challenge.
- (h) Roy Chandler reported that Essex County Council had replaced the towpath bridge at Ulting at the Council's expense.
- (i) Roy Chandler reported that dredging had been undertaken in the Beeleigh area, which had led to some correspondence [details omitted].
- (j) Roy Chandler reported that the Environment Agency had undertaken some weed cutting during the summer, to augment that done by Michael Cole with the weed cutter boat.

Update on Issues Discussed at Previous Meetings

- 7. (a) [Confidential item].
- (b) John Pomfret had yet to progress the vegetation management plan specifications, but would try to do so shortly.
- (c) [Confidential item]
- (d) Colin Edmond reported that most of the graffiti had been removed from Chapmans Bridge, but still needed to be attended to at Bundocks Bridge. The chemicals used had not proved to be as effective as had been hoped, and grit blasting would cause too much damage to the brickwork.
- (e) Roy Chandler reported that nothing further had been heard concerning the Chelmer Viaduct replacement. He would chase this up.
- (f) Roy Chandler reported that nothing further had been heard on the access arrangements along the track at Ulting gauging station. He would chase this up.

- (g) Colin Edmond reported that the mink trapping had commenced, but no mink had been caught. It may be that the mink have exhausted the area, and moved on.
- (h) [Confidential item].
- (i) Neil Edwards had circulated a draft document setting out a long-term plan for the Navigation with maintenance requirements and past achievements, etc, to assist grant applications. Board members were asked to comment on the content and assist with preparation of missing sections. John Pomfret would write something on environmental issues and Roy Chandler would prepared a section on past work achievements. Neil Edwards would then endeavour to provide an updated draft for the next meeting.

Other Business

- 8. (a) The stance taken by IWA's trustees and Navigation Committee in respect to IWA's proposals for a National Waterways Conservancy and the implications for including Essex Waterways was noted and endorsed.
- (b) Roy Chandler reported that he had received an approach from a neighbouring landowner alongside Springfield Basin over the sale of a small piece of land to improve an emergency exit from a building. The board reiterated its existing policy of not supporting the sale of any land, but would consider a short term licence for use of the land requested. This would be conveyed to the landowner, and if progressed, the agreement prepared for garden incursions could be used.
- (c) Roy Chandler tabled a handbook of electrical arrangement for the Sandford Moorings, which had been prepared following the installation of electric bollards at the moorings, largely by volunteers. A further copy would be obtained for Head Office.

Future Meetings

- 9. (a) The next meeting would be held at 10.00 am on Tuesday 7th December at Chesham. Dates for meetings to be held in 2011 would be considered at that meeting.

No other business was transacted and the meeting closed at 3.10 p.m.